Mr Andrew C. Zabriskie
with compliments of
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States

ANNUAL ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

BY

WILLIAM H. LAMBERT

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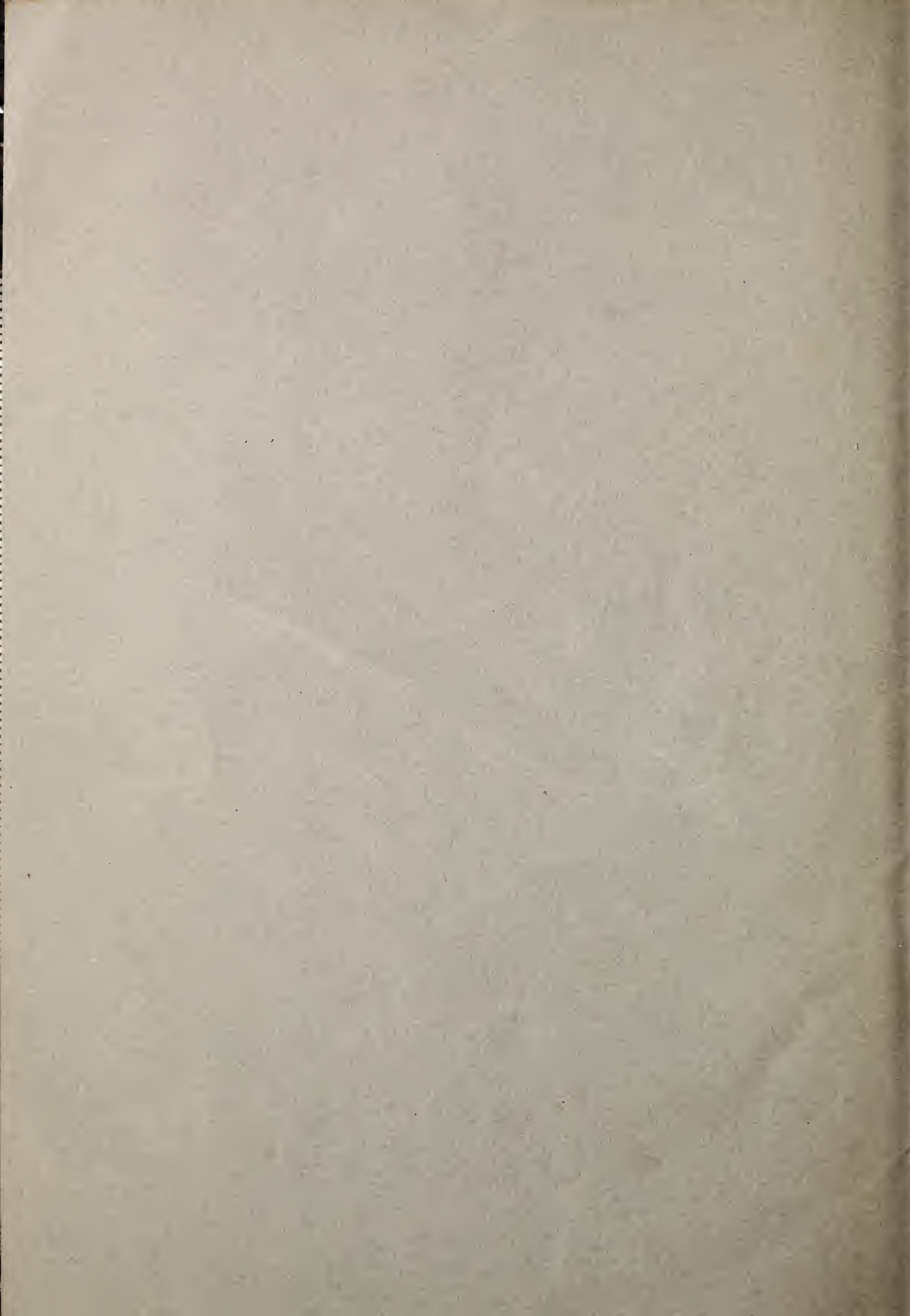

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

With each succeeding reunion of the Society of the Army of the Potomac, the task assigned its Orator becomes increasingly difficult.

The story of the grand Army has been told so eloquently, its great battles have been so forcefully described, its commanders have been eulogized so lovingly, the heroism and endurance of its men have been recounted with such enthusiasm, such full presentation has been made of all phases of its glorious history—its hopes, its fears, its defeats, its victories, the splendid review which marked its passing, the controversies concerning its campaigns—that there remains little untold.

The object of the Society being memorial and historic rather than philosophic or prophetic, I am constrained to choose a theme associated with the past rather than to consider the questions of to-day, or the outlook for the future, or the trend of destiny.

Thus constrained, and so limited, I ask your patience whilst I strive to present some phases of the character of Abraham Lincoln, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in its greatest war, hoping that the theme will not be deemed inappropriate to this occasion, for whilst he commanded all the armies of the Union, his association with the Army of the Potomac was ever closest and most intimate. It was the only Army that he personally visited and reviewed, and whilst he was interested alike in the success of all, the success of this was of most vital import, for upon the Army of the Potomac rested in especial sense, the defence of the Capital, the prevention of foreign interference, the very life of the Nation.

Such is the veneration in which the memory of Abraham Lincoln is held, such is the halo which surrounds his name and his history, that it is difficult now to recall him to view as he was before the War.

So important was his work during the four eventful years, so powerful was his influence then and since, that it is now almost impossible to realize how little known Lincoln was to the country at large prior to the assembling of the Convention which nominated him for the Presidency.

He had served a single term in the National House of Representatives; his name had been presented to the first National Convention of the Republican party as a candidate for the Vice-Presidency; he had engaged with Stephen A. Douglas in a political debate, in many respects, perhaps, the most notable in our history outside the halls of Congress: as a result of this debate, he had secured a majority of the popular vote of the State for the Republican candidates for the Legislature, which was to choose the United States Senator, but the majority of the legislators chosen was for Douglas. The fame of the debate led a club of young men in the city of New York to invite Mr. Lincoln to lecture there, and, in compliance, he made a remarkable address at the Cooper Institute, in the presence of an audience which comprised some of the foremost members of the Republican party; and because of this address he was requested to deliver a series of speeches in the New England States.

These speeches in New York and the East attracted the attention of men influential in the councils of the party, who were antagonistic to the more prominent candidates for the nomination for the Presidency, and were seeking a candidate who would be more likely to be elected.

Consideration of Mr. Lincoln's availability, the importunity of the Republican candidates for Governor in Pennsylvania and Indiana—supposedly doubtful States, local antagonism to Seward and Chase, and the intense earnestness of Lincoln's friends in Illinois and adjacent Western States conjoined to secure for him the nomination.

Seemingly so little impression had Mr. Lincoln made upon the people at large, that the conservatives who deprecated the radical phrase of the "Irrepressible Conflict" had apparently forgotten—if indeed they ever knew—that months before Mr. Seward had uttered the objectionable words, Mr. Lincoln

had asserted "A house divided against itself cannot stand, I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

For the moment, the supreme fact of the Chicago Convention of 1860 "was the defeat of Seward rather than the nomination of Lincoln. It was the triumph of a presumption of availability over pre-eminence in intellect and unrivalled fame."

In a book published in New York in 1859, entitled "Presidential Candidates, containing sketches of Prominent Candidates for the Presidency in 1860," sketches are given of twenty-one distinguished men; in another entitled "Our Living Representative Men," published in Philadelphia in 1860, thirty-four memoirs are given; in neither of these books is Abraham Lincoln named, except incidentally in one of the sketches of Douglas, where allusion is made to the defeat of the former.

The exigencies of political literature, the necessity for a biography of the candidate for the Presidency, and the enterprise of a publishing house, which in the spring of 1860, put forth in book form the Lincoln-Douglas debates, gave the great multitude the first opportunity to learn somewhat of the man who had been chosen in preference to Seward and Chase and others who, like them, had long been distinguished in public affairs. The meagreness of biographical detail about Lincoln compelled greater attention to the fully quoted speeches, which gave physical and mental substance to the campaign lives; and discriminating readers saw that he was possessed of no ordinary forensic ability. But withal, the fact remains that never, at so critical a period, had a man been chosen for so high an office, of whose fitness so little was known.

Elected to the Presidency by a minority of the popular vote of the United States, his election followed by the pronounced withdrawal of several States, Mr. Lincoln might well be awed by the stupendous responsibility which awaited him. The long period of suspense between his election and inauguration was fraught with intense anxiety, unrelieved by any public utterance from the President-elect until he set forth from the home to which he was never to return alive. His touching farewell to his Springfield neighbors, and the series of addresses in

reply to greetings from the various communities through which he passed on his journey to the National Capital, plainly showed that he appreciated the weight of the burden which he was to assume, and so far encouraged the party which had elected him; but they gave little evidence that he was equal to the impending responsibility.

In the lurid light of after events, the assertion which Mr. Lincoln made in Independence Hall that, rather than surrender the principles which had been declared there, he would be assassinated on the spot, stands pre-eminent as indicating the source and the courage of his political convictions; whilst the fact that, at the time of its utterance, he had been warned of a conspiracy to kill him, removes from these words any suspicion of striving for rhetorical effect, and invests them with the solemnity of prophecy.

The Inaugural address of the new President was awaited with painful solicitude. Apprehension that, in hope of averting disaster, he might yield somewhat of the principles upon which he had been elected; fear that, in retaliation for threats of disunion, he might determine upon desperate assault on the rights of the revolted and threatening States; mistrust that he might prove unequal to the Nation's supreme exigency, combined to intensify anxiety. The address failed to satisfy extremists either North or South, but the loyal people of the free States were delighted with the manifest determination of the President to preserve, protect, and defend the government he had sworn to uphold. But his solemn assurance that he would in no wise endanger the property, peace, and security, of any section of the country; that it was his purpose to administer the government as it had come to him, and to transmit it unimpaired by any act of his to his successor; and his appeal to the memories of the past, and the common interests of the present were alike powerless to recall the revolted States to their allegiance, or to restrain the action of other States, bent on following their example. Anticipating the commencement of Mr. Lincoln's administration, the Southern Confederacy had been proclaimed, and now its troops were arrayed against the authority of the United States, whilst the absence of efforts of repression

seemed to indicate that the dissolution of the Union, so proudly declared by the States in rebellion, was to be accomplished.

For weeks succeeding his inauguration, the new President awaited the progress of events—the policy of *laissez-faire* seemed to have been adopted. Some tentative efforts were made to relieve the beleaguered forts within the limits of the insurgent territory but apparently the Nation was drifting to death.

But the shot on Sumter wrought instant and wondrous change. However uncertain may have been Abraham Lincoln's views as to the method of maintaining the Union, his purpose to maintain it had been positively declared ; and from the moment the flag was fired upon, the method was no longer in doubt. The call of April 15, 1861, was the answer to the challenge of Charleston Harbor. We know now that the number of men called forth was strangely inadequate to the work to be done—but the value of the call was less in the number of men it evoked than in the assertion that armed rebellion was to be confronted, and that the power of the Nation was to be put forth, not for revenge or for conquest, but for its own preservation, and the enforcement of the laws.

The choice of the battle ground, as well as the conduct of the battle, measures the fitness of the leader. On the ground of National existence the great battle was begun ; at times, the cloud and the smoke of the awful four years' conflict may have obscured and hidden the field, but on that ground the final victory was won.

President Lincoln had chosen the field on which the battle for the Nation's life was to be fought : was he competent to direct its conduct?

Previous to his entrance upon the Presidency, he had had no opportunity to display any marked ability for the administration of great affairs, but the inception of the War demonstrated that the hour and the man had met. From the beginning of armed hostilities until the close of his earthly career, he showed that he possessed pre-eminent qualifications for the successful discharge of the duties of his office.

I shall not attempt to epitomize the story of his conduct of the war. Neither time nor disposition will permit me to enter

upon the discussion of controversies concerning his dealings with his subordinates, civil and military; but, craving your indulgence for the re-presentation of a familiar theme, I shall endeavor to emphasize some of the characteristics which, in my judgment, conduced to Abraham Lincoln's success as Commander-in-Chief.

Destitute of experience in statecraft, with no precedent either in our own history or in that of other lands to guide him, the task which confronted the President was of appalling magnitude. He had called to his cabinet the chief of the leaders of the Republican party, men whose greater experience in public affairs, and whose admitted ability and acquirements justified their selection, and might well indeed have induced him to submit to their direction, but he realized that as President, he could not, if he would, transfer the obligation of his office. Whatever doubts may have existed in the minds of his advisers as to the President's willingness and fitness to accept the responsibility of his station were soon dispelled, and there could be no doubt that the President dominated his administration from the beginning, when he notified the Secretary of State, "if this must be done I must do it—still upon points arising in its progress, I wish and suppose I am entitled to have the advice of all the cabinet," to the close, when he advised the Lieutenant-General, "You are not to decide, discuss or confer upon political questions, such questions the President holds in his own hands and will submit them to no military conferences or conventions."

The responsibility so accepted, he never endeavored to evade, and he never sought shelter for himself behind his subordinates; but, on the contrary, gave them praise for success, and took upon himself blame for failure in actions, which he had suggested, ordered or permitted. What he said of General Meade was typical of the President's attitude, "the honor will be his if he succeeds, and the blame may be mine if he fails." Not less characteristic of his sense of responsibility was his declaration to citizens of Missouri, "I hold whoever commands in Missouri or elsewhere responsible to me and not to either Radicals or Conservatives. It is my duty to hear all,

but at last I must within my sphere judge what to do and what to forbear."

The outbreak of hostilities presented to President Lincoln an opportunity not of his seeking, but of which he might well avail himself. However specious the plea of State rights, however disguised might be the chief motive which prompted the secession of the revolting States, he knew, as the people knew, that slavery was the real cause of the rebellion. He had long foreseen that the country could not permanently endure partially slave, partially free; he knew that slavery had been the basis of the controversies and dangers of the past. If tradition may be believed, in his early manhood he had declared that if ever he should have a chance, he would hit slavery hard and now the chance had come. Slavery was attempting the destruction of the Republic, and, by its own appeal to arms was offering an opportunity for a counter-blow, which might forever destroy an institution whose malign influence had long controlled national affairs, and endangered the perpetuity of the Nation. He was President and Commander-in-Chief; behind him was a great party enthusiastic for the proclamation of freedom to the slave, and urgent for its issue; the temptation was great, but it did not sway him from his duty. He had been the nominee of a party, but he had been elected President of the United States, and neither hope of partisan gain nor personal gratification could swerve him from what he conceived to be the obligation of his oath.

"My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery.——————
What I do about slavery——————I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union."

"If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel, and yet I have never understood that the presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the

oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery.————And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery."

With clear view, and steadfast purpose, President Lincoln devoted his life to the preservation of the Union. To accomplish this end, in the spirit of the great Apostle to the Gentiles he made himself servant unto all that he might gain the more. Subordinating self, personal prejudices and partisan feelings were not allowed to obtrude between him and his conception of the country's need. Possession of ability to serve the cause was the essential qualification for high office and honor, and outweighing other considerations, atoned for past or present personal objection. At the opening of 1862 he appointed as chief of the War Department a man of boundless zeal and energy, who had treated Mr. Lincoln with marked discourtesy, had denounced his conduct of the war, and had freely expressed dislike for him and doubt of his fitness—an appointment as sagacious and fortunate as it was magnanimous. He retained in his cabinet the Secretary of the Treasury, whose own aspirations for the Presidential nomination were well known to Mr. Lincoln, who wrote, "Whether you shall remain at the head of the Treasury Department is a question which I will not allow myself to consider from any standpoint other than my judgment of the public service, and, in that view, I do not perceive occasion for a change." And to a strong partisan and personal friend, who was disposed to hold the President at fault because he continued in high commands men who were supposed to be wanting in perfect accord with the administration, he replied: "I need success more than I need sympathy, and I have not seen the so much greater evidence of getting success from my sympathizers than from those who are denounced as the contrary. It does seem to me that, in the field, the two classes have been very much alike in what they have done, and what they have failed to do. In sealing their

faith with their blood, Baker and Lyon and Bohlen and Richardson, Republicans, did all that men could do; but did they any more than Kearny and Stevens and Reno and Mansfield, none of whom were Republicans, and some at least of whom have been bitterly and repeatedly denounced to me as secession sympathizers?"

In discussing the causes of the War of the Rebellion it is not uncommon to attribute the conditions which preceded it to the machinations of fanatics and partisan extremists—Abolitionists and Disunionists—and it is frequently asserted that had they been restrained, disruption would have been avoided. Unquestionably, agitation of the slavery question on the one hand, and the effort to suppress that agitation on the other, embittered popular feeling North and South; but that these were more than powerful influences is incapable of proof. The cause of the War was inherent in the very existence of slavery. Time and again the efforts of conservative statesmen to avert threatened disunion had been successful, and the evil day had been postponed. But the several legislative compromises between opposing forces had become successively more difficult of enactment, and the duration of each had become less than that of its predecessor. The limit of compromise had been reached, the conflict had indeed become irrepressible, the country could no longer endure half-slave, half free—the issue must be determined, and the strife was on. Political ambition, partisan hate, intemperate zeal hastened, but deep-seated popular conviction caused the outbreak.

The War of 1861-5 was no mere factional contest. It was a people's war, begun by a people jealous of its institutions, fearful of the wane of the power it had long wielded, distrustful of the new administration's assurances of non-intervention with the rights of States, and conscious that the limitation of slavery to the territory that it now occupied must eventually effect its extinction. The war was accepted by a people innocent of purpose to interfere with the "domestic institution" within State lines, and far from united in opinion about slavery, and though substantially opposed to its extension over the country's free domain, not agreed as to the best method of

legislative treatment; but absolutely one in love for the Union and determination to maintain it.

"One would make war rather than let the Nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came."

Only the enlistment of the people on each of the contending sides could have sustained so long a war of such magnitude, and offered such heroic devotion as distinguished the war against and for the Union. President Lincoln realized that his ability to make effective his oath to preserve the government was dependent upon the firm and continued support of the loyal people, that he could lead them no faster and no further than they would follow, and that he must deserve if he would retain their confidence. His faith in the principles of the Declaration of Independence, his conviction that the people were the rightful source of all governmental power, had suffered no change by his elevation to the Presidency. In an especial sense a man of the people, the restraint which kept him closely in touch with them was not unwillingly borne, but readily accepted as the condition under which he best could act with and for them.

The acquisition of vast power, increasing with the prolongation of the war, made no change in the simplicity of his character. Unhampered by conventionalities, indifferent to forms, he received his old-time friends with the freedom of their earlier intercourse, and was accessible to all who sought him. No visitor was too humble for his consideration, and if, in too many instances, the causes which received his attention were too trivial to engage the thought of the Chief Magistrate of a great nation, the very fact of his willingness to see and hear all, endeared him to the people, who saw in him one of themselves unspoiled by power, unharmed by success.

As no President before him had done, he confided in the people; and in a series of remarkable letters and speeches, explained or justified his more important acts by arguments of simplest form but marvelous strength. His frankness and directness of expression, his obvious sincerity and absolute patriotism, even, perhaps, as much as the force of his reason-

ing, compelled respect for his acts, and enlarged the numbers and increased the faith of his strenuous supporters.

The sympathetic audience which the President gave to every tale of woe, his manifest reluctance to inflict the extreme penalty which violation of military law entailed, seemed at times to detract from the dignity of his high office, and prompted commanding officers to complain that the proper maintenance of discipline was rendered impossible by Mr. Lincoln's sensibility; but these characteristics strengthened his hold upon the people at home and in the army. In his profound sympathy, in his splendid courage, in his transparent honesty, in his patriotic devotion, in his simplicity of thought and manner, nay, in the very haggardness of feature, ungainliness of form, and homeliness of attire, he seemed the expression of a plain people's hopes, the embodiment of their cause, which he steadily upheld, even when, for the moment, other forces seemed powerless.

Here was neither Cæsar nor Napoleon, but a popular leader such as befitted a Republic destined to preserve its popular form, though its ruler wielded imperial power; a leader whose highest ambition was to save the country and to transmit the government unimpaired to his successor; a leader who, in an hour when his administration seemed to have lost popular support, calmly faced the prospect of defeat by the ballot and the election of another in his stead; and who, though commanding a million of armed men whose love and loyalty to him were unquestioned, deliberately wrote for his own guidance, "It seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterward."

Commander-in-Chief of the greatest army on the globe, Mr. Lincoln was yet so forgetful of self, that desiring a position in that army for his son, he made application to the General-in Chief in these words:

"Please read and answer this letter as though I was not President, but only a friend. My son, now in his twenty-second

year, having graduated at Harvard, wishes to see something of the war before it ends. I do not wish to put him in the ranks, nor yet to give him a commission, to which those who have already served long are better entitled and better qualified to hold. Could he, without embarrassment to you or detriment to the service, go into your military family with some nominal rank, I, and not the public, furnishing his necessary means? If no, say so without the least hesitation, because I am as anxious and as deeply interested that you shall not be encumbered as you can be yourself."

Generals intoxicated with power and anticipations of success, might assert the country's need of a dictator and, apparently, be not unwilling to assume the role, but the President, without shadow of jealousy of any of his subordinates, shrewdly declared "only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I ask of you is military success, I will risk the dictatorship."

His readiness to accord to others the praise due their service to the country was markedly characteristic of Mr. Lincoln, and was most notable in his high appreciation of the services of the men who on land and sea were upholding the country's flag. Not in an assumption of modesty, but from the fullness of his heart came the assertion at Gettysburg, "the world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it will never forget what they did here." This was not the only tribute that he paid to those who had borne the battle. On many public occasions, in official communications, in responses to congratulations upon victories won by troops or ships, he gratefully acknowledged the indebtedness of the Nation, and of himself as its Chief, to those who gave or risked their lives that it might live.

And of his sympathy with those who had suffered for the cause of the Union his acts and words give fullest proof--as when to the Massachusetts mother whose five sons had fallen in battle he wrote "I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the

thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

His regard for the soldier himself had many forms of expression, but none finer than his gift to the Chicago Sanitary Fair, of the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, the document whose authorship and issue already constituted, in the esteem of millions, and in that of millions more was to constitute, his strongest title to immortal fame.

"I had some desire to retain the paper; but if it shall contribute to the relief or comfort of the soldiers, that will be better."

That Mr. Lincoln was always fortunate in the selection of his military chiefs, that he never countenanced unwise military movements, and that he was free from errors of judgment and action, impartial history will not claim; but the purity of his motives, the sincerity of his effort to secure the best results for the country, cannot be gainsaid, and no fair-minded observer will dispute the President's shrewdness and sagacity, the general accuracy of his appreciation of military conditions, and the wisdom of the greater part of his suggestions.

General Sherman, whose honesty and ability as a military critic will not be disputed, said of Mr. Lincoln, "that without professing any technical military knowledge, he seemed to be possessed of the essential principles of military law, science and art——————he possessed a knowledge of man in the abstract, whether soldier or citizen, which gave him the key to all human motives and actions," and his correspondence "exhibits a wonderful familiarity with actual events, and the strength of our own armies and detachments, and of those of the enemy; the objects which it was desirable to accomplish in the near future, and the best way to accomplish them; all of which were purely military, as distinguished from the political aims and purposes which must have absorbed so much of his time."

And beyond President Lincoln's ability to understand the military situation, and to give wise counsel, the confidence and

support which he gave to all his leaders—in unstinted measure as they demonstrated their worthiness of his trust; the willingness with which he admitted his own limitations, and commended those who met or exceeded his hopes, called forth from his command the best endeavor, the highest devotion for the Commander who had such broad sympathy, loyal purpose and unenvious appreciation.

The splendid manifestation of popular feeling which followed the assault upon Sumter might easily have caused the President to rely confidently upon popular support in his every effort to suppress the Rebellion—the generous response to his call for troops might readily have assured him that the number of volunteers would exceed all needs—and have led him to expect the speedy end of the war; but he was not deluded by the hope that the war would be of short duration, but saw the necessity of preparation for a long struggle, and felt the importance of conserving all interests, and of securing the support of all who, however they may have differed in other respects, agreed in devotion to the Union. Hence, he made concession to the opinions of those who whilst opposed to disunion, did not sympathize with his own views concerning slavery and its extension. How a free people would conduct a long war was a problem to be demonstrated, and President Lincoln was unwilling to alienate any who were faithful to the government, even though they deprecated the occasion which had placed it in jeopardy. His sagacity and his observation had shown him how wavering were the currents of popular opinion, how readily popular enthusiasm could be quenched by disappointment and defeat, and how imperative it was for him to hold together all elements requisite to the successful prosecution of the war.

The enthusiasm of the Sumter days might be chilled by the disasters of Bull Run and Ball's Bluff, but its energy was to become endurance, and thus, final victory. Whoever else might lose heart, the President could not—him disaster could not dismay nor defeat discourage.

Disappointed friends might inveigh against his caution and demand dismissal of leaders and change of policy, luke-

warm supporters might withdraw their confidence, supersensitive observers might denounce heroic war measures as invasions of personal or of State rights, but, despite harassment and annoyance and antagonism, the Commander, unshaken in purpose, indomitable in courage, moved steadily on. The defection of old friends and party associates might grieve him, the unjust accusations of nominal Unionists might rankle, but he could not be deflected from the line of his duty.

He knew that other than purely military considerations might rightfully determine campaigns; that success in the field, though conducive to success at home, and to ultimate triumph was not the only essential; and that to maintain the armies at the front it was imperative to sustain the sentiment of the people at home. From the broader outlook of the Capital, from his knowledge of the people directly and through their chosen representatives he appreciated, as the generals in the field could not, the absolute necessity of popular support as well as of military success.

Consciousness of President Lincoln's fitness for his exalted station, not less than popular approval of his course, retained him as Commander, though opportunity for change came in a dark period of the war, when the stress and struggle of its four years had disheartened many who had once been his adherents. In the fortunes of the war, they who led the several armies at its termination were men unknown or inconspicuous at its beginning, the gifted soldiers who first gave form to those armies were not those who led them to ultimate victory; but the great Commander who first called the people to arms was he who led them to the triumphant close.

Presidenit Lncoln gave early evidence that he was willing to assume the gravest responsibilities by acts which he believed would conduce to the great end that he had in view. "I feel that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the Nation. Right or wrong I assumed this ground, and now avow it." Acting upon this theory, whilst he had abstained from striking at slavery as an evil in itself and in its results, yet when, by deliberate and painful

consideration, he became convinced that the preservation of the Union demanded freedom for the slave, he determined upon emancipation so far as he could effect it consistently with his constitutional obligation and his military prerogative. We honor his memory because of the courage and the foresight which led him to this great and beneficent act, but we do not detract in any wise from his fame as the liberator of the slave when we call attention to the fact that uniformly he justified the act by its military necessity, and never claimed for it the merit of righteousness because it abolished a great wrong. Earlier in the war, he had revoked Fremont's and Hunter's attempts at emancipation because he regarded their action as unwarranted assumption of power, and because he did not believe the indispensable necessity for emancipation had come; and later, he thus expressed himself: "The original proclamation had no constitutional or legal justification, except as a military measure.————If I take the step, (making the proclamation applicable to parts of Virginia and Louisiana which had been exempted because of our occupancy of them) must I not do so without the argument of military necessity, and so without any argument except the one that I think it a measure politically expedient and morally right? Would I not thus give up all footing upon constitution or law? Would I not thus be in the boundless field of absolutism?" And in his message to Congress in December, 1863, "According to our political system, as a matter of civil administration, the general Government had no lawful power to effect emancipation in any State, and for a long time it had been hoped that the rebellion could be suppressed without resorting to it as a military measure."

But having decided upon emancipation as a military necessity, he also declared that he would not retract or modify the proclamation, nor would he return to slavery any person who had been freed by its terms or by any of the acts of Congress, and in his last annual message repeating that declaration he said, "if the people should, by whatever mode and means, make it an executive duty to re-enslave such persons, another and not I must be their instrument to perform it."

Emancipation, which, in its inception, was necessarily limited and largely tentative, became, by force of his action and by reason of his advocacy, universal and permanent; by legal procedure inspired by him the war measure became a constitutional enactment, and to the end of time Abraham Lincoln will be known as the Liberator of four millions of slaves.

The possession of imperial power, the accomplishment of complete victory—saving the Union and securing its by-product, emancipation, the plaudits of exulting thousands did not change the man, or tempt him to forego his allegiance to the Constitution, or to waver in his devotion to "the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence." No aspiration for perpetuity of power separated him from the plain people upon whom he relied, from whose ranks he had come, to whom he expected to return. For it is his glory that he not only completed a great work, and guaranteed its beneficent and far-reaching consequences, "but," to quote another's language, "that during the stormiest and most perilous crisis in our history, he so conducted the government and so wielded his almost dictatorial power as to leave essentially intact our free institutions in all things that concern the rights and liberties of the citizen."

When forty thousand Frenchmen, chafing under the imperial rule that had overthrown their loved Republic, sought to express their sympathy with the American people in the hour of its profound grief, they presented to the widow of the martyred President a massive gold medal, upon which was inscribed this summary of his work, this legend of his eternal fame: "LINCOLN THE HONEST MAN—ABOLISHED SLAVERY, RE-ESTABLISHED THE UNION—SAVED THE REPUBLIC—WITHOUT VEILING THE FORM OF LIBERTY."

From the highest reach that Mr. Lincoln had attained before his accession to the Presidency to the zenith of his career, the space seems incalculable. The study of his earlier life shows indeed that he possessed clearness of thought, remarkable gift of expression, native sagacity, honesty of purpose, and courage of conviction; that he was devoted to the rights of man, and that he loved his country; but that he possessed elements

of greatness in such degree as was revealed by the war, could not have been surmised from aught he had said or done. And that he should manifest so soon and so signally his ability to rule a great nation in the most dangerous period of its existence; that he should overtower his associates, and prove that more than they he was fitted to save the government; that he could wield a power vastly greater than that which had been possessed by his predecessors and surpassing that exercised by any contemporary ruler, king or emperor, could not have been foreseen by any lacking divine inspiration. Not by graded steps, but by giant stride, Lincoln reached the height of power, achievement, and fame.

True, the progress of the war revealed growth in his character, thought, and force, and he stood conspicuously higher at its close than at its beginning; but at its opening it was apparent that Providence had so shaped the country's destiny that the man who had been chosen mainly because of his availability as a presidential candidate was far and away the one man for the office and the work.

Thus it came to pass that he who, at the beginning, had said truthfully, "I cannot but know what you all know, that without a name—perhaps without reason why I should have a name—there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the Father of his Country," within four years of that utterance had attained such renown and wrought such result that on the roll of great Americans the one name which we think it not robbery to be equal with that of WASHINGTON is the name of ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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